

## Dealing With Nuisance Animals

In our increasingly urbanized society, we seldom interact with live wild creatures but while we may not see them every day, they do live in all Island towns, cities and other developed areas. These areas provide habitats for raccoons, skunks, crows, foxes, squirrels, and many other species of birds and small mammals. They are attracted by access to food, shelter and safety, and while we may not always be aware of them, damage to lawns and gardens, garbage strewn around the yard, foul odours or loud calls and cries can provide a quick wake up call about their presence.

In many cases, these animals were attracted to the area by a combination of factors, so dealing effectively with problem wildlife may require several steps. For instance, skunks and raccoons are common residents in urban and rural areas. They are often attracted by easy access to food, so proper disposal of open garbage and removing outdoor pet food bowls will help to discourage them.

Once these animals begin to frequent an area, they will also look for sheltered places to hide and raise their young. If you look around the average neighbourhood, it's relatively easy to find suitable shelters under sheds, wood piles, and other places. Ensuring that these areas are sealed off will discourage unwanted visitors but in urban areas, this may require a neighbourhood approach if you want to remove all of the potential sites.

In cases where an active denning site is located, you can encourage the animals to move by playing loud music near the entrance to the den or running a hose in and keeping the site damp. In most cases, the animals will quickly leave to find a quieter or drier place to rest or raise their young. However, if you choose the loud music option, be sure to tell your neighbours what you are doing and when you plan to do it.

In some cases the problem may become serious enough that other measures may be warranted, so a licensed trapper or commercial pest control company may be called in to quickly and humanely deal with the problem. While some people may feel that capturing the animal and releasing it into the wild is the best answer, in most cases this simply transfers the problem from one community to another. As well, any wilderness area will only support so many individuals of a given species, so introducing new animals can impact the availability of local food and living space for the creatures that already live there.

In all cases, people should begin by evaluating the situation to determine if there really is a problem or just an inconvenience. Often it is easier to learn to live with wildlife by keeping away and letting skunks eat the chinch bugs or enjoying the sight of foxes hunting and playing in the snow.

You can get more information on PEI wildlife at [www.gov.pe.ca/eef/wildlife](http://www.gov.pe.ca/eef/wildlife)